



County of Bladen North Carolina

Request for Proposals: Fire Service Study

Issued: October 01, 2023

Responses Due: November 15, 2023 5:00 PM

County of Bladen
201 East King Street
Elizabethtown, NC 28337
Gregory Martin
County Manager
gmartin@bladenco.org

REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL: FIRE SERVICE STUDY

PURPOSE:

The County of Bladen, NC (hereinafter “County”) is seeking an emergency services consultant experienced in the management and operations of volunteer fire departments and rural fire service operations to undertake an organizational, effectiveness and overall efficiency study on staffing levels, facilities, equipment, operations, administration, and general financials, of the fire departments (hereinafter “departments”) serving our community.

BACKGROUND:

The County of Bladen is located in the southeastern part of North Carolina, in the United States. It is located to the south of the City of Fayetteville and just northwest of the City of Wilmington. The population of Bladen County was 29,446 as of the 2020 U.S. census. According to the United States Census Bureau, the County has a total area of 875.03 square miles, of which, is comprised of 98.6% land area and 1.4% water area. The County is split down the center by the Cape Fear River which runs on a NW/SE axis.

The County of Bladen is served by 17 non-profit contract fire departments. Based on NFPA 1720 all the departments except 1 are volunteer with the other being a combination department. Three of the departments are located in other counties.

The requested study is part of the County’s efforts to evaluate its fire service through a comprehensive look into existing levels of staffing, facilities, equipment, organization and funding. The results of this study should include recommendations for long term success, viability, stability, and improved efficiency and safety for both firefighters and citizens both immediately and long-term.

INTENT:

The primary intent and goal of this request for proposal (hereinafter “RFP”) is to retain a consultant that can conduct a study to assess whether existing levels of staffing, facilities, equipment, organization and funding are adequate to provide a level of service within the County that is in line with generally accepted standards and benchmarks for safety used by comparable fire departments as well as based on standards and “best practices” for modern-day fire services currently in practice in the United States, and define modifications and timeline for any alternative models for service delivery.

QUALIFICATIONS:

Eligible bidders (“Bidder”) will be those individual consultants, companies and institutions that have the following qualifications:

Experience and expertise regarding to the operations, structure, staffing (including collective bargaining), and other issues critical to the effective operation of a modern fire department with a focus on rural based volunteer, combination and/or paid on-call organizations operating in North Carolina.

- 1) Bidder must be actively or previously engaged in the administration or operation of a rural volunteer fire department and/or engaged in the type of work called for this RFP.
- 2) Bidder must possess a proven track record of reviewing emergency services agencies’ management and operations and making “attainable” recommendations that are legal, ethical, take into consideration budget constraints and that can result in improving operations.
- 3) Knowledge of federal and state laws and regulations and generally accepted standards for similarly sized communities and fire departments.
- 4) No bids will be considered from any Bidder for any contract unless the Bidder is known to be skilled and has been regularly engaged in work of a character similar to that covered by the 3 specifications for at least three (3) years prior to the date of the work subject to this RFP.

In order to assist the County in determining the responsibility of the Bidder, the Bidder shall provide the County, in writing, evidence of their experience and familiarity with the work specified and the financial ability to undertake the proposed work. The evidence requested, without being limited, should include the following:

- a. Bidder’s performance record with listing of work of a similar character.
- b. Evidence, in the case of a corporation organized under the laws of any other State, that the Bidder is licensed to do business in the State of North Carolina.
- c. Such additional information that will satisfy the County that the Bidder is adequately prepared to perform the work subject to this RFP.

SCOPE OF SERVICES:

The project requires an assessment to determine whether existing staffing, facilities, equipment, organization and funding levels are adequate to provide a level of services in the County that is in line with generally accepted standards and benchmarks for a community of like character. The selected individual/firm should take the following information and topics under consideration (and include these topics in the final

narrative) when conducting the review:

1) A review of background information that impacts the fire service including:

- a. Community population and demographics
- b. Residential, commercial, industrial and municipal features of the community
- c. Policies and agreements that may determine staffing levels and practices
- d. Memorandums of understanding/contracts/vendor agreements and resources
- e. ISO ratings – historical, current and projected
- f. District maps
- g. Response statistics
- h. Vehicles and staffing/run assignments
- i. Review of general management practices
- j. Review of any long-range plans
- k. Review of training – minimum qualifications, accessibility, quality, etc
- l. Review of budgets – revenues, general expenditures, capital, county fund balance, debt service, tax rates and, Firefighter's Relief Funds
- m. Review of fire department facilities & equipment
- n. Review of succession planning; and o. current and historical incentive programs
- p. Review of vehicle fleets, replacement plans and future needs assessment.

2) At a minimum, input should be solicited from the following individuals either through conference calls or personal interviews:

- a. Elected/appointed officials
- b. County administration and emergency services officials
- c. Fire department officials and
- d. Officials from partner organizations such as EMS, College, 911 center, etc.

3) Preliminary report to be reviewed and critiqued with the appropriate individuals from the County.

4) Final report:

a. Eleven (11) bound and organized final reports as well as an electronic copy should be delivered in person to the County in conjunction with an on-site PowerPoint presentation (approx. 30-45 minutes in duration) that reviews the key findings of the report that will be done for elected officials and key County operations staff.

b. All data, photographs and related information gathered during the review shall be surrendered to and be deemed property of the County upon payment of final invoice.

c. Confidentiality during the project shall be expected by the County and no comments to the media or individuals not directly connected to or involved in the study shall be made without the express permission of the County.

PROJECT TIME FRAME:

The County is seeking to have a final report and recommendations within 180 days following the execution of the contract for these services.

PROPOSAL CONTENT:

Bidder's proposal shall be organized as to provide the following information:

- 1) Business organization: State full name and address of Bidder including names of lead professional personnel, their titles and experience for all personnel assigned to this project. Provide a brief description of the individual or firm including qualifications, experience, and other supporting information.
- 2) Include a resume and a sample list of prior projects in which Bidder has participated.
- 3) Provide sample or example pages from previous report narratives for similar types of studies.
- 4) Proposed timeline for project completion.
- 5) Provide a list of references, including contact information, from North Carolina public safety agencies that have engaged the services of the Bidder.

SUBMISSION PROCESS:

The County Manager will receive proposals for the work outlined in this RFP. Proposals must be received at the County Administration building located at 201 East King Street Elizabethtown, NC 28337 on or before 5:00 P.M., prevailing local time, on November 15, 2023.

All must be prepared in accordance with the requirements of this RFP. The proposal shall be submitted in a sealed envelope, that is clearly labeled to show the following:

- a. The name and address of the Bidder
- b. The title: "Proposal-Fire Service Study"
- c. The name and address: Mr. Gregory J. Martin, County Manager, County of Bladen, 201 East King Street, Elizabethtown, NC 28337
- d. Bids must be delivered in person, via overnight delivery or via U.S. Mail. No facsimile or other electronic transmissions will be accepted.

- e. The issuance of this request for proposals (RFP) constitutes only an invitation to submit responsive proposals to the County. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this RFP, the County reserves the right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether any aspect of the proposal satisfactorily meets the criteria established in this RFP, to request additional information from any Bidder, to waive immaterial defects in any proposal, to reject any or all proposals with or without cause, and to take any action that the County deems appropriate.

The County intends to select that proposal which, in the sole opinion of the County, is most favorable to the convenience of the County and shall not give rise to any rights in any person. In the event that a Contract is not awarded for any reason or that this RFP is withdrawn for any reason, the County shall have no responsibility and/or liability to pay any Bidder for any cost or expenses incurred in connection with this RFP or the proposals or transactions contemplated by this RFP or otherwise.

- f. The County of Bladen shall have the right to disqualify any Bidder who in the past has not performed in accordance with the contractual requirements of a previous contract for the County.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY:

The Bidder will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment because of race, color, religion, sex, age or national origin. Bidder will take all steps to ensure employees are treated during employment without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age, or national origin. Such action shall include but not be limited to the following: employment, upgrading, demotion or transfer, recruitment or recruitment advertising, layoff or termination, rates of pay or other forms of compensation, and selection for training, including apprenticeship.

AWARD:

The County reserves the right to accept or reject any proposal to best serve its interests and to hold the proposals for ninety (90) days before rendering any decision. Acceptance of any bid does not place the County or any of the fire departments under any obligation to award the lowest-priced response.

COMPENSATION:

Bidders shall agree to provide a firm lump sum fee costing for work covered under this proposal and shall not list their list cost as hourly or open-ended. This lump sum fee shall include cost such as travel, mileage, meals, accommodations, rental cars, office

supplies, printing, copying, postage, mailing shall be detailed and included in the proposal. Upon acceptance of proposal, Bidder agrees to submit invoices and W-9 forms based on agreed fees.

TERMINATION:

Following implementation, should the County find that the Bidder has failed in any material respect to perform its agreed-upon obligation under the agreement, the County shall have the right to cancel the agreement as being in the best interest of the County subject to 30 days written notice.